



CITY OF AUBURN

Planning Commission – Staff Report

Meeting Date: September 21, 2010

Prepared by: Adrienne Graham, Consulting Planner

**ITEM NO.
V-A**

ITEM V-A: BALTIMORE RAVINE SPECIFIC PLAN AND STUDY AREA PROJECT – FILES GPA 07-3; SPA 07-1; RE 07-1; SUB 07-2; DA-07-1

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Auburn is processing the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (BRSP) and Study Area Project (Project), which is proposed for the 406-acre Urban Reserve area situated in southwest Auburn. The City prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project and circulated the EIR to the public and government agencies from June 8 to July 23, 2010.

PURPOSE OF HEARING:

The purpose of the September 21, 2010 Planning Commission hearing is to review and take public comment on the Project and associated approvals, including the General Plan Amendment, Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan, Rezone, Large Lot Tentative Map, Development Agreement, Environmental Impact Report, and Statement of Reasons for Permitting Development in a Mineral Resource Zone. No action will be taken by the Commission at this hearing.

A second Planning Commission hearing was noticed and is scheduled for November 16, 2010. It is anticipated that the Commission will consider and take action on all of the entitlements listed above, as well as the Final EIR, at the November 16th hearing.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Applicant: Stephen Des Jardins; Baltimore Ravine LLC; 130 Diamond Creek Place, Suite 1; Roseville, CA 95747; Phone: 916-786-8158

Location: The plan area is generally bounded by Auburn-Folsom Road to the east, Interstate 80 to the north and northwest, the westbound Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) track to the south, and the City/County boundary to the west (see Exhibit A).

Project Size: 406 acres

Zoning: Agricultural Residential (AR), Agricultural Residential/Mineral Extraction (AR-ME), Single-Family Residential (R1-10), Single-Family Residential/Mineral Extraction (R1-10/ME)

General Plan: Urban Reserve (UR)

Existing Land Uses: 14 residences

Surrounding Land Uses:

North: Interstate 80, Industrial, Residential
South: Residential, Union Pacific rail line
East: Residential, Auburn Recreation District
West: County rural residential

BACKGROUND

The project site is located in an area of the City designated by the Auburn General Plan as Urban Reserve. The Urban Reserve designation requires a Specific Plan prior to any development. The City received an application in mid-2007 to develop the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan on approximately 277 acres of the 406-acre Urban Reserve area. The remaining 129 acres are not included within the BRSP area, but are designated Study Areas. The Study Areas are proposed to be redesignated Rural Density Residential (RDR) with a minimum 2 acres per dwelling unit.

Prior Plans for the Urban Reserve

The Urban Reserve area has been the subject of several previous studies and development proposals, although none have been adopted to date.

- In 1969, the City expanded its boundaries to the west and annexed the Urban Reserve area into the City of Auburn.
- In 1978, the City prepared and certified an EIR that evaluated potential roadway access to 209 acres in the Urban Reserve area. No improvements or development occurred.
- In 1979, the plan area was designated Urban Reserve with the adoption of the 1979 General Plan in recognition that it could be developed at some point in the future and that the City wanted the area to be master planned.
- In 1985, the “Southwest Area Road Access Study” was prepared and evaluated roadway alternatives through the plan area to connect the portion of the site between I-80 and the westbound UPRR tracks.
- In 1987, the City approved the Vista del Valle #4 subdivision, which included dedication of right-of-way for the Herdal Drive extension.
- In 1988, the City received a proposal for the Auburn Vista Subdivision, a 33-acre parcel with 135 lots. This led to a preliminary draft of the Southwest Area Specific Plan in 1990. This specific plan area included 270 acres with a mix of residential, commercial/professional and open space uses. The plan provided for 1,056 dwelling units. The Southwest Area Specific Plan and accompanying Draft EIR were never completed or adopted by the City.
- In 1993, the Southwest Auburn Specific Plan was drafted which included 321 acres (including the Grand Oaks project area). This plan included up to 1,232 residential units, along with neighborhood commercial, pocket parks, and open space uses, with a portion remaining in urban reserve. An NOP was issued for this project plus up to 864 dwelling

units in the Urban Reserve (for a total of 2,096 units) in 1994, but the project was put on hold in 1995.

Current Project

The current applicant submitted a proposal in 2007 to prepare the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan, which would guide development of 277 acres of the Urban Reserve. A Notice of Preparation of an EIR for that proposal was released in December 2007, and the City held a scoping meeting on January 24, 2008. The BRSP proposal was subsequently revised by the applicant, responding in part to staff and community concerns. The revised BRSP also accounts for the natural topography of the site, which includes many steep hillsides and slopes. A second Notice of Preparation of an EIR for the revised proposal was released in April 2009.

The Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan was made available for public review in October 2009 (Exhibit B). An Addendum to the BRSP was released on July 7, 2010 which reflects revisions to the BRSP proposed by the applicant and staff (Exhibit C).

The Draft EIR for the project (see Exhibit D) was prepared by the City and circulated from June 8 to July 23, 2010. A public hearing to accept comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIR was held on July 13, 2010. The staff report and draft minutes for the July 13th Planning Commission meeting are attached as Exhibits E and F, respectively.

Other activities related to the Project include:

- Planning Commission hearing (December 15, 2009): A public hearing was held to overview the contents of the draft BRSP and accept public comments on the proposed plan. The staff report and minutes for the December 15th Planning Commission meeting are attached as Exhibits G and H, respectively
- Site Tours: Several tours of the BRSP area were held during March through May 2010 for Council members, Planning Commissioners and the public. The staff report prepared for the Site Tours is provided with Exhibit I.
- Mineral Resource Zone Draft Statement of Reasons: A portion of the project site is designated MRZ-2b, recognizing the potential for gold deposits to be present. Public Resources Code Section 2762 requires that the City adopt a Statement of Reasons prior to permitting development in MRZ-2b areas. A notice of intent to permit development within the MRZ-2b area was sent to property owners within ½ mile of the project site, pursuant to PRC 2762. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on August 3, 2009 to take public comment on the draft Statement of Reasons. A copy of the staff report and the draft minutes from the August 3rd meeting are attached as Exhibits J and K, respectively.
- City website: All of the above documents have been made available through the City's website, along with pertinent staff reports and notices (www.auburn.ca.gov).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project would allow for development of up to a total of 790 residential units (725 units in the BRSP, with 270 units in Plan Area 1, 455 units in Future Plan Area 2, and 65 units in the Study Areas), 90,000 square feet of commercial/mixed-use space, 2 acres of park and 141 acres of open

space. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the Project by proposed land use. Details of the Project are discussed briefly below, followed by a summary of the planning documents that are before the Planning Commission.

Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan

The Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (Exhibit B) establishes a framework for developing 270 acres of the Urban Reserve. The BRSP identifies land use designations, sets minimums and maximums for development within each land use, provides plans for circulation and utilities,

TABLE 1 BALTIMORE RAVINE SPECIFIC PLAN LAND USE SUMMARY				
Land Use Designation	Applied Zoning District	Acres	Density Range	Dwelling Units
BALTIMORE RAVINE SPECIFIC PLAN				
Residential				
Low Density Residential (LDR)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential District)	12 acres	Up to 1 du/ac	11 du
Urban Low Density Residential (ULDR)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential District)	52 acres	1-4 du/ac	155 du
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	R-2 (Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential)	17 acres	1-10 du/ac	150 du
Urban High Density Residential (UHDR) ¹	R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential)	11 acres	5-20 du/ac	180 du
Non Residential				
Mixed Use – High Density Residential/Commercial (HDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-3 (Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential)	17 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 5-15 du/ac	50,000 sf 130 du
Mixed Use – Urban High Density Residential/Commercial (UHDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential)	8 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 10-20 du/ac	30,000 sf 120 du
Mixed Use - Urban Low Density Residential/Commercial (ULDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-1 (Single-Family Residential)	3 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 1-4 du/ac	10,000 sf 2 du
Park & Open Space				
Park	OS-C	2 acres		
Open Space	OS-C	141 acres		
Right of way (ROW)		14 acres		
Total		277 acres		725 du
Study Areas				
Study Area 1		32 acres	1du/2ac	16 du
Study Area 2		14 acres	1du/2ac	7 du
Study Area 3		36.5 acres	1du/2ac	19 du
Study Area 4		46.5 acres	1du/2ac	23 du
Total		129 acres		65 du
BRSP AND STUDY AREAS TOTAL		406 acres		790 du 90,000 sf

includes standards and guidelines that will shape the character of development within the plan area, and addresses financing and implementation. In some cases, the requirements (e.g., design guidelines) are more detailed for Plan Area 1 than for Future Plan Area 2. The additional detail required for Future Plan Area 2 must be amended into the BRSP in the future before Future Plan Area 2 development can proceed.

The BRSP proposes a mix of residential and non-residential land uses to form a new residential community in the southwest area of Auburn. The majority of the BRSP area would be developed with residential uses that would include up to 725 new homes with a density range of 1 to 20 du/ac. In addition, the BRSP provides for development of up to 90,000 square feet of retail/commercial/mixed uses in Future Plan Area 2, which could include residential over ground-floor retail.

The land use plan provides for a community core, located in Future Plan Area 2, with a mix of commercial and residential uses, including residential units over ground-floor retail along Main Street, and a 2-acre park. Sidewalks and bike paths on Main Street and other primary streets would provide pedestrian and bicycle access to the commercial area and park. The higher-density residential uses are generally placed in and around the community core, with lower-density residential uses located in the southern portion of the plan area, where in combination with open space, they provide separation from and a transition to the existing residences to the south of the plan area.

The BRSP provides extensive open space areas, which frame the residential neighborhoods, provide separation from existing residences, preserve natural resources and provide a significant visual amenity. Over half of the plan area, approximately 141 acres, is proposed to be preserved in permanent open space. Unimproved dirt trails would be constructed in some areas. The open space areas would preserve the ravines, drainages and expanses of woodlands. Natural terrain would also be retained in some of the lower-density residential lots, as grading will be limited to only the front 80 to 100-feet of the lots.

The proposed project would require the extension of roads and water and sewer lines. Access would be provided by the extension of Herdal Drive, which would connect to an extension of Werner Road. Two bridges would be constructed across the UPRR tracks, including a bridge across Bloomer Cut. A connection would be provided to Rogers Lane to provide secondary access to Plan Area 1 for the first 75 units. After completion of the Herdal Drive-Werner Road Connector, BRSP traffic would no longer use Rogers Lane. Werner Road, Rogers Lane and the Werner Road/Ophir Road intersection would be improved as part of the project. A connection from Plan Area 1 to Perry Ranch Road would provide emergency access, but no improvements would be made to Perry Ranch Road. Off-site water and sewer line extensions would occur within road rights-of-way.

The BRSP provides several recreational amenities such as a small park, open space, bike lanes, and pedestrian trails. The BRSP also recognizes the importance of “Bloomer Cut” as well as other historic resources within the plan area by including a historical marker describing the events surrounding construction of the transcontinental railroad through the area as well as historic mining operations.

The BRSP identifies the anticipated sources of funding for BRSP improvements, including developer financing, the City's sewer connection fee, the Auburn Recreation District Fee, and the County Capital Facilities Fee. Maintenance of landscape corridors, open space, drainage basins and trails would be funded through a homeowner's association and/or landscape and lighting district.

The BRSP Development Standards identify the uses permitted within each zone within the BRSP, and specify the requirements for lot size and coverage, setbacks, building heights, and parking. Development standards for the zones that apply only to Future Plan Area 2 (e.g., commercial, R-3) will be added to the BRSP at the time that development approvals are effectuated for Future Plan Area 2.

The Design Guidelines provide direction for the physical form and visual character of the BRSP. Toward that end, graphics and photographs are provided to illustrate application of the guidelines. The guidelines are meant to be used in combination with the Development Standards, the direction of the BRSP and applicable City ordinances and regulations. The guidelines are intended to encourage creativity in developing designs for public spaces and individual development projects. Like the Development Standards, the Design Guidelines for Plan Area 1 are included in the BRSP at this time. Additional Design Guidelines will be added to the BRSP at the time that development approvals are effectuated for Future Plan Area 2.

The Design Guidelines cover several aspects of development design:

- Common design elements throughout the plan area, such as streetscapes, landscaping, entrances, signs, walls and fencing, grading and street lighting.
- Site-specific Design Elements for certain features, such as Bloomer Cut, bridge design and retaining walls.
- Residential Architecture, including scale and massing, roof and window forms, porches, garages and exterior finishes.

Changes to the October 2009 Version of the Specific Plan

Following the release of the BRSP in October 2009, the applicant has made several changes (e.g. secondary access), and additional changes have come about through staff's review of the BRSP (e.g. park requirements). These changes are summarized below and provided in the Addendum (Exhibit C). They are also incorporated into the land use table included earlier in this staff report, and the project evaluated in the Draft EIR does include all of the changes listed below,

Exhibit C explains the differences and includes copies of various pages and figures that reflect the changes in the list, which should be used in combination with the Specific Plan in order to fully understand the BRSP as currently proposed. If and when the BRSP is approved, a final revised version will be prepared, and will include all of the adopted changes. The most substantial changes are summarized below.

- **Rogers Lane** – The October 2009 BRSP identifies Perry Ranch Road as a secondary access. The current land use plan has been modified to use Rogers Lane for

secondary access instead. A cross section for Rogers Lane has been prepared for inclusion in BRSP Chapter 5.

- **Street D** – Street D is a new street proposed to connect Plan Area 1 to Rogers Lane. The street section proposed for Streets A and B will also apply to Street D, with the exception that no landscape frontage will be provided where the street traverses open space (Parcel 89A).
- **Land Use Figure** – The land use figure (Figure 3-1 in the BRSP) has been revised to reflect the connection to Rogers Lane and the addition of Street D. The revised figure is provided above.
- **Land Use Summary Tables** – The acreage values in Tables 3-1 and 3-2 of the BRSP have been revised to reflect the changes associated with the Rogers Lane access and Street D. Table 1, above, reflects the changes.
- **Main Street** – The BRSP identifies the main access through the plan area as “Main Street”. The name of this access has been changed to the Herdal-Werner Connector. Due to the significant number of reference changes that would be required throughout the BRSP, staff is not providing complete updates at this time. All references to Main Street will be deleted and replaced with “the Herdal-Werner Connector” (e.g. see Attachment 1 in Exhibit C).
- **Herdal Cross-Sections** – The applicant’s original proposal for the extension of Herdal Drive involved a conventional road section. The applicant is now proposing a split-road section with a landscaped median and 7’ tall masonry walls (8 foot along one section) on both the northern and southern sides of the roadway (see Attachment 1; Fig 5-10 in Exhibit C).
- **Park Requirements** – Section A of Chapter 6.2 (Public Services) addresses the park requirements of the BRSP (see Exhibit C). This section has been amended to reflect comments by City staff and review by the Auburn Parks and Recreation District.
- **Design Guidelines** – The applicant is amending the Design Guidelines to include the following plans:
 - Emergency Vehicle Access is proposed from Parcel 3A to Perry Ranch Road.
 - Landscape Buffer – A landscape buffer is proposed between Parcel 3A and Perry Ranch Road.
 - Schematic Lot Plan – A schematic lotting configuration and open space easement is proposed on the western side of Parcel 3A, abutting the Jackson property to the west.

The changes identified above are not all-inclusive, but represent the most significant modifications to the BRSP to date. It is possible that additional revisions to the BRSP will occur in the future. Staff will track all modifications to the BRSP and will keep the Planning Commission and the City Council informed prior to any required review or action.

Study Areas

Concurrent with approval of the BRSP, the City proposes to amend the General Plan to re-designate the four Study Areas (129 acres in total) from Urban Reserve to Rural Density

Residential (RDR), with a minimum 2-acre lot size. This designation would provide a limited holding capacity for infrastructure and public services. The redesignation of the Study Areas is analyzed in the Draft EIR at a programmatic level, because site-specific studies have not been conducted, and specific proposals for the Study Areas have not yet been made.

Requested Project Approvals

Although no action will be taken at the September 21, 2010, Planning Commission meeting, there are a number of approvals and actions that will come before the Commission on November 16, 2010, and ultimately the City Council. Key actions that will require a recommendation from the Planning Commission are:

- **General Plan Amendment**
 1. Replace Urban Reserve designations with BRSP land use designations: As stated earlier, the Urban Reserve designation in the General Plan requires the adoption of a specific plan. Adoption of a specific plan is conducted by amending the General Plan. The General Plan Amendment for this plan will adopt the BRSP land use designations for Plan Area 1 and the Study Areas (Exhibit L-2). Future Plan Area 2 would retain the Urban Reserve designation until future development approvals are undertaken.
 2. Adopt new Urban High Density Residential designation: The BRSP includes a new land use designation, Urban High Density Residential (UHDR), that is not recognized in the current General Plan. The existing General Plan includes a High Density Residential designation (HDR) that allows for up to 15 units per acre. In order to provide for higher, more urban densities, approximately 18 acres in Future Plan Area 2 would be designated Urban High Density Residential (UHDR), which would allow for 10 to 20 units per acre. In order to include the UHDR designation in the BRSP, the General Plan must be amended to add the UHDR designation.
- **Specific Plan – Adoption of the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (Exhibit B) as amended by Exhibit C and any other amendments adopted by the Commission and/or Council.**
- **Rezone – Rezoning Plan Area 1 consistent with the BRSP. Future Plan Area 2 would retain its current zoning at this time. The Study Areas would also be rezoned AR-0.5. The existing and proposed zones are shown in Exhibits M-1 and M-2, respectively.**
- **Large Lot Tentative Map – Approval of a Large Lot Tentative Map for Plan Area 1 consistent with the parcel configuration illustrated in the BRSP. A Large Lot Tentative Map creates large parcels within a project that facilitate the financing, sale and development of the project. The proposed BRSP Large Lot Tentative Map is attached as Exhibit N. Unlike the other Project approvals, the Commission is the body that approves or denies Large Lot Tentative Maps. Therefore, the action before the Commission in November will be to approve or deny the Large Lot Tentative Map. Approval of the map would be contingent on Council approval of the BRSP and associated approvals.**

- Development Agreement – Approval of a development agreement for Plan Area 1 which formalizes the requirements and expectations of the applicant and future developers. The draft Development Agreement is attached as Exhibit O.

California law authorizes cities and counties to enter into development agreements with persons having a legal or equitable interest in real property (Government Code Sections 65864-65869.5). A development agreement may specify conditions, terms, restrictions and requirements for development of the subject property, including terms and conditions related to applicant financing of necessary public facilities. The Development Agreement for the BRSP applies only to Plan Area 1, which is controlled by Baltimore Ravine LLC. A separate development agreement will be required for Future Plan Area 2 when it develops.

The Plan Area 1 Development Agreement ensures that the City is kept and/or made whole by the applicant with respect to all financial and other aspects of planning, development, maintenance and operation of Plan Area 1. Upon the activation of the Development Agreement, the applicant would have full and vested rights to develop Plan Area 1, consistent with the provisions of the Specific Plan, EIR and Development Agreement.

The Development Agreement addresses a number of items, including:

- Establishment of financing mechanisms
- Fees for processing of subsequent approvals and reviews
- Provisions for reimbursement by Future Plan Area 2 development of costs incurred by the applicant but of benefit to Future Plan Area 2 development
- Primary, secondary and emergency access to Plan Area 1
- Other roadway improvements
 - Perry Ranch Road landscaping
 - Herdal Drive traffic calming
 - Offsite roadway paving
- Affordable Housing
- Open Space Trails
- Homeowners Association
- Tree mitigation
- City communication facilities

The development of Plan Area 1 will be subject to the provisions of the Development Agreement, along with the BRSP and EIR.

- Statement of Reasons to Permit Development in a Mineral Resource Zone: As discussed above, a portion of the plan area has been designated a Mineral Resource Zone by the State geologist. State law requires that the City adopt, and the State Board of Mines and Geology accept, a Statement of Reasons for permitting development in an area that has been identified as an MRZ. The Statement of Reasons is attached as Exhibit P.

- Environmental Impact Report - The Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan and Study Areas Project Draft EIR (Exhibit D) was prepared by the City as required by CEQA to evaluate and disclose the environmental effects of the Project, and to identify mitigation measures and alternatives that could avoid or lessen those impacts. A project-specific analysis is provided for the BRSP, and the Study Areas are analyzed at a less detailed, programmatic level. The Draft EIR was circulated for a 45-day review period from June 8 through July 23, 2010, as required by CEQA. The EIR, which will be composed of both the Draft and Final EIRs, is intended to cover all of the approvals identified in this staff report.

Letters commenting on the Draft EIR were received from 12 agencies, 2 organizations and 18 individuals. In addition, 10 people spoke at the July 23 hearing. Comments were received on a variety of EIR issues, including traffic, biological resources, cultural resources, fire protection, noise, toxic air contaminants, and public services. The major issues raised in EIR comments and at public hearings on the Project, are discussed below under **Concerns Raised to Date**.

The City is preparing written responses to all substantive comments (received in writing through July 23 or orally at the July 13 hearing) on the adequacy of the Draft EIR. The written responses to comments, along with any revisions to the Draft EIR, will become the Final EIR. The Draft and Final EIR together compose the EIR for the proposed project.

The Final EIR will be available for the November 16, 2010, hearing. At the November 16th hearing, the Planning Commission will be asked to take two separate actions regarding the EIR. First, the Commission will make a recommendation to Council regarding the adequacy of the EIR with respect to its evaluation of the environmental impacts of the BRSP and all of the related approvals. Second, because the Commission is the approving authority for the Large Lot Map, the Commission must certify that the EIR adequately evaluates the impacts of the Large Lot Map.

- Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations--The Findings of Fact will document the CEQA process for the proposed project, identify significant impacts and mitigation measures, and explain why alternatives to the project are or are not rejected. The Findings must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record for the EIR, and must include an explanation that bridges the gap between evidence in the record and the conclusions required by CEQA. The Statement of Overriding Considerations is prepared when the Project is found to have significant impacts that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The Statement will explain how the benefits of the Project balance against unavoidable environmental impacts.

The Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations will be available for the November 21, 2010, hearing.

- A Mitigation Monitoring Program will be prepared, which, as required by CEQA, will identify all mitigation measures contained in the EIR, the parties responsible for implementing and monitoring the measures, and the timing of the measures. The Mitigation Monitoring Program will be available for the November 21, 2010, hearing.

CONCERNS RAISED TO DATE

A variety of concerns about the Project have been raised at hearings and in response to the Draft EIR. Public concerns generally fall into the following categories:

- **Increased development in the City of Auburn:** Some members of the public have expressed concern about increased growth and development in Auburn, particularly on the scale proposed in the BRSP. In response, the City is expected to grow over time, with or without the BRSP. SACOG projects that the City's population will grow from approximately 13,500 residents in 2009 to approximately 18,000 by 2035, and increase of about 33 percent. If approved, the BRSP would provide residences and commercial services for a portion of this increased population. Further, the Urban Reserve has been identified as an area for potential growth since the 1978 General Plan, and is the last large, contiguous undeveloped area in the City. The size of the BRSP is the result in part of the acreage to be developed.
- **Changes to the small-town character of Auburn:** Concern has been expressed that the BRSP would alter the small town character of Auburn, and that the BRSP is not compatible with the character of Auburn. In response, the proposed project is consistent with the densities of development found throughout the City. With the exception of the proposed 20 du/acre zone, the densities in the BRSP are similar to those found elsewhere in Auburn, with lower density residential development occurring near the Urban Reserve, and higher density and mixed-use development occurring in Old Town, downtown and some of the more commercial areas of the City. The community core in Future Plan Area 2 is intended to create a small-scale neighborhood. The BRSP would increase traffic levels on local roadways, which could be perceived as changing the character of areas that have low traffic volumes at present. However, Project traffic would be directed toward major roads, such as Auburn-Folsom and Indian Hill, and would generally not travel through existing residential streets. With the exception of road improvements, the BRSP would not alter existing neighborhoods, Old Town, downtown or other areas characteristic of Auburn.
- **Increased traffic congestion, particularly on Herdal Drive, Auburn-Folsom Road and Indian Hill Road:** The BRSP would increase traffic volumes on the local street network. The traffic study prepared for the EIR evaluated the effect of the Project on roadway segments and intersections in the City of Auburn and Placer County, as well as Interstate 80 under both existing and cumulative conditions (roughly twenty years in the future). At some locations, the Project was found to create or substantially exacerbate poor levels of service. However, the Project will be required to implement mitigation measures to improve conditions at these locations. The identified improvements would result in acceptable conditions at all of the study segments and facilities. A caveat is made for improvements to the Interstate 80/Newcastle Ramp intersection. Because Caltrans and/or the County must concur with the recommended improvements, the City cannot guarantee that they will be installed. However, if recommended improvements are installed, the intersection operations would be acceptable.

Some comments compared future traffic levels on Auburn-Folsom Road to those currently experienced on Highway 49. In response, even with full occupancy of the BRSP, the volume of traffic on Auburn Folsom Road will remain far below that reported today on SR 49. While the raw traffic volume is not itself a measure of significance, as shown in Table 2, current volumes on SR 49 will remain more than twice the Existing Plus BRSP volumes forecast for Auburn Folsom Road.

TABLE 2 COMPARISON OF PEAK HOUR SEGMENT VOLUMES ON SR 49 AND ON AUBURN FOLSOM ROAD				
Street	From	To	Peak Hour Volume	
			AM	PM
Existing Conditions				
Auburn Folsom Rd	Maidu Dr	Herdal Drive	1,225	1,330
Auburn Folsom Rd	Herdal Dr	Sacramento St (N)	1,180	1,260
Grass Valley Hwy	Lincoln Way	EB I-80 ramps	1,580	1,560
Grass Valley Hwy	WB I-80 ramps	Elm Avenue	2,595*	2,675*
Grass Valley Hwy	Dorothy Way	Marguerite Mine Rd	2,527*	2,482*
Grass Valley Hwy	Live Oak Ln	Luther Rd	2,773*	3,264*
Existing Plus BRSP Area 1				
Auburn Folsom Rd	Maidu Drive	Herdal Drive	1,225	1,330
		project only	105	130
		total	1,330	1,460
Auburn Folsom Rd	Herdal Drive	Sacramento St (N)	1,180	1,260
		Project only	70	85
		Total	1,250	1,345
Existing Plus BRSP Build Out (1 & 2)				
Auburn Folsom Rd	Maidu Dr	Herdal Road	1,225	1,330
		Project only	200	520
		Total	1,425	1,850
Auburn Folsom Rd	Herdal Drive	Sacramento St (N)	1,180	1,260
		Project only	105	135
		Total	1,285	1,395
* SR 49 data from Placer County's Bohemia Center DEIR				

- Proposed access points: Some residents of the neighborhoods immediately north and south of Herdal Drive have expressed concerns about Herdal Drive providing a primary access to the BRSP. The residents with backyards adjacent to the Herdal Drive extension are particularly concerned about the extension of the road. Their concerns are addressed in detail below.
- Bridging of Bloomer Cut: Bloomer Cut is a significant historic railroad feature. The Project would not alter Bloomer Cut itself, but would span the cut with a new bridge. Currently, the area immediately adjacent to Bloomer Cut is undeveloped, so a new bridge would change the setting of the cut. The Draft EIR evaluates the impacts of bridging Bloomer Cut, and concludes that while the bridge would alter the setting, Bloomer Cut

would still be considered a significant historic resource, because it would continue to meet the criteria for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Resources (a standard method of determining whether a site or feature is historically significant).

In their comments on the Draft EIR, the Placer County Museum and the Placer County Historical Society, as well as several individuals, disagreed with the conclusions of the EIR, and stated that Bloomer Cut should not be bridged. These comments will be addressed in the Final EIR.

The Draft EIR analysis of Bloomer Cut was conducted by qualified historians, and staff concurs with the findings. It should be noted that even though Bloomer Cut is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the ultimate determination of eligibility would be up to the Office of Historic Resources if the cut were nominated to the NRHP. However, nomination requires the involvement of the property owner, in this case Union Pacific, which has indicated that it would not pursue such an action.

- Loss of and/or degradation of cultural resources that could be present within the plan area: Questions were raised about the adequacy of the cultural resource surveys, and concerns were raised that Native American sites or artifacts may have been overlooked. These comments will be addressed in the Final EIR. PBSJ did conduct site surveys following standard protocols, and consulted with UAIC, including a visit with UAIC representatives to identify potential Native American sites and/or areas of concern. The Draft EIR contains extensive mitigation to protect any archaeological resources that might be present on the site.
- Loss and/or displacement of wildlife: Concern was expressed about the displacement and loss of wildlife and trees. The plan area includes undeveloped woodlands and grasslands that provide habitat for a number of plant and animal species. The BRSP designated over half of the Specific Plan area as Open Space, which would be relatively undisturbed, and therefore would continue to provide habitat for resident species. Nonetheless, development of the site would convert a large portion of this habitat to urban uses, which would not be compatible with all of the species currently within the site. In some cases, particularly with birds, the displaced animals could move into areas designated open space or other nearby undeveloped areas. Other individual animals or plants would be lost to development. For the most part, the affected wildlife would be common species, such as deer, turkeys, small mammals and other birds.

The Draft EIR identified several special-status species plant and animal species (that is, those that are on State or federal lists of rare, threatened and endangered species), that could occur within the Urban Reserve, and provided mitigation to protect them.

- Increased traffic noise: Because the Project would increase traffic volumes, it would increase traffic noise levels on existing roads. A noise study was prepared and determined that the increased noise would not exceed identified thresholds on roads that were studied. Noise levels on Herdal Drive, the Herdal Drive extension and Werner Road would exceed thresholds, but the Draft EIR identifies mitigation (i.e. sound walls; pavement treatments) that would bring noise levels down to acceptable levels.

- Exposure of future residents within the BRSP to train-related hazards: Comments were made that future residents of the BRSP would be subject to air pollutants from train engines traveling through the area. A detailed assessment was made of the potential exposure to hazardous emissions for the Draft EIR. The conclusion of the assessment was that the residents would not be subjected to a substantial risk from such emissions.

To the extent that the concerns raised involve physical changes to the environment (including increased traffic congestion, loss of cultural and/or natural resources, exposure of residents to noise, air pollution and hazardous materials), they are addressed in the Draft EIR and will be addressed in the Final EIR.

Herdal Drive Extension

Residents of the neighborhoods immediately north and south of Herdal Drive and the Herdal Drive extension have been particularly concerned about the use of Herdal Drive as the primary access to Plan Area 1. There are 15 homes with backyards that abut the Herdal Drive extension right-of-way, which is undeveloped and covered with trees, shrubs and grasses. Ten of those properties abut the south side of the right-of-way, while five abut the north. The properties to the south all are at elevations below the existing right-of-way and proposed road, while the properties to the north all have elevations higher than the existing right-of-way and proposed road.

The development of the BRSP will result in a definite change in the character of this area by constructing a road that will be used for one of the primary accesses to the BRSP. Because of this change and the concerns of the affected residents, a number of analyses have been prepared at a greater level of detail than normally conducted at this point in the approval process. For example, the Draft EIR includes a parcel by parcel analysis of traffic noise levels along the extension. Staff has met with some of the residents, including the President of the adjacent homeowners association. One meeting was held in the field.

The Draft EIR analyzes the effects of the project along the Herdal Drive extension, particularly for traffic, noise, visual quality, biological resources, and visual resources, based on field surveys and modeling at a level of detail typical for a project-specific EIR on a Specific Plan. Since the Draft EIR was released, the applicant has provided additional detail regarding the design of the road relative to adjacent properties. A number of survey points have been collected in the field and used to refine the profile and elevation information for the road design. Cross-sections have been prepared at a number of locations showing the roadway elevation, soundwalls and adjacent parcels in order to better understand the effects on specific residences. The cross-sections are attached as Exhibit Q.

Cross-section views were provided for each of the five properties abutting the north right-of-way, where the parcels are higher in elevation than the road right-of-way. As discussed below, three cross-sections were provided for one of those parcels. These cross-sections were used by the City's noise consultant to evaluate the impacts to those properties given the estimated increase in traffic to be generated by the project. The information was also provided to the owners of several of the abutting properties at their request. Feedback was provided by a couple of those owners suggesting that the information provided was less than accurate. The applicant's surveyor then

obtained additional topographic information to confirm the accuracy of the data presented. Due to access issues, the additional data obtained was limited to the right-of-way. City staff worked with the property owners and the applicant to obtain permission for the applicant's surveyor to enter backyards of the abutting properties in order to obtain additional data in those areas, but unfortunately permission to access additional backyards has not yet been obtained. Surveyors were allowed to access one backyard, 10940 Oak View Terrace, which has the most diverse topography of the lots abutting the extension, so additional analysis was conducted for this parcel.

Of the five properties to the north, 10940 Oak View Terrace is unique in that the house is set back on the lot in close proximity to the rear lot-line while the existing topography across the lot (from west to east) has a significant drop in elevation (roughly seven feet). Due to the uniqueness of this lot, additional cross sections were prepared by the applicant: one at the high-side (west), one at the low-side (east), and one roughly mid-lot where there is a deck off the back of the house. Due to the fact that the owner of this property was present at the time the surveyor was obtaining additional topographic data within the right-of-way, with the owner's permission, additional data was obtained within the backyard of this property. The additional three cross-sections were provided to the City's noise consultant and supplemental noise analysis was performed.

The noise analysis assumed the most recent roadway design provided by the applicant. The applicant proposes to drop the road elevation along 10940 Oak View Terrace by approximately 2 feet and to increase the height of the wall to 8 feet (as opposed to 7 feet along the remainder of the road) to provide additional shielding from noise.

The noise analysis indicates that, within the backyard of 10940 Oak View Terrace, noise levels would be below the City's standard of 60 dB Ldn, which is consistent with the findings of the Draft EIR for all of the backyards along the Herdal Drive extension. The increase in noise levels over existing ambient conditions in the backyard of Parcel 10940 would be below 5 dB, which is the threshold used in the EIR to determine if an increase in noise is significant. Therefore, the additional detail provided for this parcel reinforces the Draft EIR's conclusion that noise impacts would be less than significant after mitigation.

Although not required for the EIR analysis, the noise analyst evaluated the effects of noise at the deck at 10940. The deck extends from the first floor of the house, several feet above the ground level of the backyard, and occupies approximately 13 percent of the backyard. Therefore, people standing on the deck would be higher than people elsewhere in the backyard, and would be subject to higher noise levels. Even at the deck elevation, the noise analysis indicates that with the 8-foot wall, noise levels on the deck would increase only 4 dB over existing conditions.

Alternative Access

Development of the BRSP requires at least two 24-hour, unrestricted access points. The project applicant proposes to provide the required accesses by connecting Herdal Drive to Werner Road, which will require two new bridges over the UPRR tracks and construction of a new road through the BRSP (i.e. the Herdal-Werner Connector). Concerns have been raised about the southern access, which would extend Herdal Drive and construct a bridge over the UPRR rail line at Bloomer Cut.

Prior projects proposed for the Urban Reserve, which includes the BRSP area, have also had to grapple with the issue of access. A number of options have been considered in the past. The circulation plans for the Urban Reserve area have, for the most part, assumed that both tracks would need to be crossed, and that the crossings would be placed at locations similar to those proposed in the BRSP. A crossing at Bloomer Cut has been assumed as a primary crossing or an option in all of the plans that were reviewed. Both Maidu Drive and Herdal Drive have been considered as routes to connect the Bloomer Cut crossing to Auburn-Folsom Road. Other access points have been proposed, including connections to Pacific Street and High Street, particularly in the 1993 Southwest Auburn Specific Plan, which provided for connection to these streets in addition to (not instead of) the primary routes via Indian Hill Road and Werner Road.

In March 2010, staff prepared a memorandum (Exhibit R) discussing the various access routes that had been considered in the past or suggested during hearings on the BRSP. Since that time, additional analysis has been conducted to compare the area that would be disturbed by each alternative, including a rough estimate of the amount of woodlands that would be lost (see Exhibit R). An additional alternative, using the PG&E powerline corridor that intersects with Tea Lane, was suggested in comments on the Draft EIR, and is also evaluated in Exhibit S. The access alternatives that were reviewed are discussed briefly below, and in more detail in Exhibits R and S.

1. Herdal Drive extension: As with prior plans, Bloomer Cut was considered an optimal point at which to cross the rail line because it would require minimal grade changes in order to span the tracks. A relatively short-span (approximately 70-feet) bridge is proposed, which would clear the existing Bloomer Cut and would provide enough clearance to accommodate the addition of a second track, if UPRR should decide to construct one. This route would add traffic through an existing neighborhood, but this was anticipated when the residential development was approved. Impacts on natural resources would be minimal, because the new road would be relatively short (less than 1,000 feet) and would travel through an area that is already disturbed (the City right-of-way) and/or composed primarily of grasslands. Approximately 0.9 acres would be disturbed, including approximately 1.0 acres of woodland. In addition to the physical advantages, the City owns the right-of-way for the Herdal Drive extension, and one of the parcels in Plan Area 1 (the Chevreux parcel), has an access easement on the extension.
2. Maidu Drive extension: This was one of the options considered in prior plans, including the SWASP. This option would require a longer road extension (approximately 1,300 feet) and right-of-way acquisition for the entire length. Like the Herdal Drive extension, this option would construct a bridge over Bloomer Cut. Because of the topography, portions of the area would need to be filled and the bridge would need a longer span (approximately 400 feet). Like the Herdal Drive extension, this option would place the new roadway adjacent to existing backyards of residences. In addition, the Maidu Drive extension would require fill of a wetland area, necessitating approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers through the Section 404 permit process. The road would also be constructed through a designated Open Space area under separate ownership. The area that would be disturbed would be approximately 2 to 3 acres, including 1 to 2 acres of woodland. Consequently, the impact on natural resources would be greater than the Herdal Drive extension.

3. May Perry Drive: Under this option, a new road would connect to Auburn-Folsom Road north of the rail line, and extend southward, through the ARD recreation area, more or less parallel to the rail line. The area that would be traversed by this option includes two ravines that would require bridge crossings. No crossing of the rail line would be required under this option, so Bloomer Cut would be unaffected. However, it would require right-of-way acquisition for the approximately 2,000 feet that lie outside of the BRSP area. The roadway would be approximately 4,500 feet long, much of which would travel through woodlands, so it would require more tree removal than the Herdal Drive extension. Approximately 6-10 acres, including 4 to 7 acres of woodlands, would be affected. ARD facilities would also be affected by this alignment, which would bisect Recreation Park. The costs of this option could be relatively high due to the length of the road (which would include utilities), mitigation for loss of trees and impacts on Recreation Park, acquisition of right-of-way and construction of two bridges to cross two ravines.
4. Pacific Street extension: Under this option, Pacific Street would be extended from Auburn-Folsom Road west over the rail line and then turn south to the northeast corner of the BRSP area. The roadway would be a total of approximately 3,500 feet long. In order to bridge the tracks, a significant amount of fill (creating a 30-foot high roadway embankment) would be required. The rail line bridge would need to span approximately 150 to 200 feet, which would be longer than the Bloomer Cut bridge (70 feet), but not as long as a bridge from Maidu Drive (400 feet). The roadway embankment fill would need to extend onto the ARD property where it would then ramp down to meet existing ground elevation on the west side of the tracks. Approximately 1,000 feet of right-of-way would need to be acquired. Approximately 5 to 8 acres would be disturbed, and approximately 4 to 7 acres of woodland would be affected.
5. Rail line crossing south of Pacific Street: This option would provide a connection to Auburn-Folsom Road approximately 400 feet south of Pacific Street, near the existing Boardman canal. The total roadway length would be approximately 3,000 feet. An elevated bridge crossing would be required to provide adequate clearance, resulting in significant grading for bridge approaches and a longer bridge span (approximately 200 feet) than the Herdal Drive option. Within the BRSP area, the alignment would be similar to the May Perry and Pacific Street options, so there would need to be significant grading and two additional bridge crossings across two ravines. Approximately 4 to 7 acres would be disturbed, including approximately 3 to 5 acres of woodlands.
6. High Street extension: High Street terminates in the Woodland Estates subdivision, immediately north of Study Area 3 and west of the northern rail line. This area is fairly steep; High Street has a 15% grade at its terminus. A connection between High Street and Future Plan Area 2 would require multiple switchbacks with steep grades and a bridge over the ravine. The ravine is located approximately 130 feet (in elevation) below the terminus of High Street, so the grade would be fairly steep. The area is heavily wooded, so there would be extensive impacts on trees. This connection would also route BRSP traffic through an older area of the City with relatively narrow residential streets.
7. Tea Lane: A comment on the Draft EIR suggested that access could be provided to Plan Area 1 via Tea Lane, which intersects with Indian Hill Road at the same point as the PG&E transmission lines. The access road would extend north from the existing Indian Hill/Tea

Lane intersection, following the transmission line easement across Dutch Ravine to Perry Ranch Road. Approximately 300 feet of Perry Ranch Road would then need to be widened and improved to provide access to Plan Area 1. This alignment would travel through two residential parcels, and would likely requiring the removal of at least one out building. It would not be feasible to build the road within the transmission line easement, because there are towers within the easement. PG&E would require a minimum separation from the towers and the road of at least 25 feet. The easement is approximately 70-feet wide, and the road would need to be at least 43 feet wide, there would not be enough room for the road to avoid the towers and stay within the powerline easement. One tower is approximately 150 feet from Indian Hill Road, so it would be difficult to for the access road to connect to Tea Lane and follow an alignment adjacent to the powerline. Also, a connection with Indian Hill Road between Tea Lane and Sawka Road is not feasible due to spacing.

If an alignment that connected with Tea Lane while avoiding the towers could be found, there would still be major disadvantages to using this approach. Because of the topography, there would be extensive fill. The area that would be disturbed would be approximately 2 to 3 acres, of which 1 to 2 acres would be woodlands. An extremely long bridge span, approximately 1,000 feet would be needed to cross the railroad. Right-of-way would need to be obtained for approximately 2,400 linear feet. In addition, permission to improve and use a portion of Perry Ranch Road, which is a private road, would be required. The connectivity provided by this access would also be less advantageous, with increased emergency response times compared to the very direct route afforded by Herdal Drive.

As explained in Exhibit R, staff concurs that the Herdal Drive extension with the bridge over Bloomer Cut is the most appropriate means of providing access to the southern portion of the BRSP. The extension of Herdal Drive has been part of plans for providing access to the Baltimore Ravine area for more than 30 years, as evidenced by prior plans and the existing right-of-way on the extension. It is the most direct route, involving the least amount of roadway construction, and the shortest bridge span. The amount of cut and fill necessary for this route, and the impacts on natural resources, including woodlands, would be less severe than under other options. The primary disadvantages are that the roadway would be located adjacent to existing backyards and that the bridge would be constructed over a significant historic resource, Bloomer Cut. However, the extension was anticipated in approvals for the existing residences, and the bridge would be designed so that Bloomer Cut itself would not be altered. Further, most of the alternative access routes that have been discussed would be adjacent to residences and/or result in increased traffic in residential neighborhoods.

EXHIBITS

All exhibits are available for review in the Auburn Community Development Department

- A. Project Location and Features
- B. Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (provided separately)
- C. Addendum to the BRSP – July 7, 2010
- D. Draft EIR for the BRSP and Study Area Project (provided separately)
- E. Planning Commission Staff Report for DEIR review – July 13, 2010
- F. Planning Commission Minutes for DEIR review (draft) – July 13, 2010
- G. Planning Commission Staff Report – December 15, 2009

- H. Planning Commission Minutes – December 15, 2009
- I. Planning Commission Staff Report for Site Tours – March 26, 2010
- J. Planning Commission Staff Report for MRZ-2b review – August 3, 2010
- K. Planning Commission Minutes for MRZ-2b review (draft) – August 3, 2010
- L.
 - 1. Existing General Plan Land Use Designations
 - 2. Proposed General Plan Land Use Designations
- M.
 - 1. Existing Zoning
 - 2. Proposed Zoning
- N. Large Lot Tentative Map
- O. Draft Development Agreement
- P. MRZ Statement of Reasons
- Q. Herdal Drive Extension Cross-Sections
- R. Staff Memorandum regarding BRSP Access – March 26, 2010
- S. Uhora Memorandum regarding BRSP Access – September 1, 2010

P:/Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan/Staff Reports/BRSP PC Hearing 9-21-10.pcreport1 final